



[Frantz Fanon, 1925 - 1961](#)

## Frantz Fanon

The extraordinary co-incidence of dates of both birth and death as between **Frantz Fanon** and **Patrice Lumumba**, both born in 1925 and both deceased in 1961, highlights the precociousness of Fanon's critique of the post-colonial regimes which had so recently, from his standpoint, come into existence. Please read the essay "Pitfalls of National Consciousness", attached.

This essay was published in the book "The Wretched of the Earth" in French in 1961 and in English translation in 1963. The title of the book is a direct quotation from the song, the "[Internationale](#)", written by Eugene Pottier during the Paris Commune of 1871, the lyrics of which in the original French begin: "Debout, Les Damnés de la Terre!" Les Damnés de la Terre became the title of Fanon's book and was well translated into English as "The Wretched of the Earth" – a phrase since then embraced by generations of militants.

Fanon is so intelligent, and so witty, that it is easy to be charmed by him to such an extent that critical faculties are put aside. So much of what he wrote nearly fifty years ago has come to pass, not

once, but repeatedly, and not in one, but in many countries, that one has to be astonished.

No other writer on this topic has come close to the range and the brilliance that Fanon exhibits with such apparent ease in this essay. To find literary comparisons one has to go far back, to the likes of [Voltaire](#) and [Jonathan Swift](#).

Fanon is particularly emphatic here in his denunciation of the national bourgeoisie in the circumstances of the newly independent country. Among other things he says:

*“In its beginnings, the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries identifies itself with the decadence of the bourgeoisie of the West. We need not think that it is jumping ahead; it is in fact beginning at the end. It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearlessness or the will to succeed of youth.”*

Is Fanon right? In South Africa, we certainly have problems of “tenderpreneurs”, “narrow BEE”, corruption and many other manifestations of the premature degeneration of the bourgeoisie, similar to Fanon’s descriptions.

But we also have a theory and practice of National Democratic Revolution involving Unity-in-Action between classes, particularly between the working class and the national bourgeoisie. We have found this class alliance to be indispensable. Fanon did not have this theory.

This document is a great classic and is typical of the best of African Revolutionary Writing. But it is not a Bible.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: Frantz Fanon, [Pitfalls of National Consciousness](#), 1963.**
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